

Introduction

THIS VOLUME, *Christianity and Monasticism in Alexandria and the Egyptian Deserts*, contains the papers that were presented at the eighth international symposium of the St. Mark Foundation for Coptic History Studies and the St. Shenouda the Archimandrite Coptic Society. The symposium was held at the Logos Center in the papal residence in Wadi al-Natrun, February 12–15, 2017. The volume is arranged in three categories: language and literature; art, archaeology, and material culture; and preservation. The chapters within each category are arranged alphabetically by the author's last name. The twenty-nine chapters of this volume cover Alexandria, the great city that played an instrumental role in shaping early Christianity in Egypt and the world, as well as Egypt's two largest regions, the Eastern and Western Deserts. Taken together, these chapters contain significant contributions on various aspects of Coptic civilization and provide an up-to-date treatment of Christianity and monasticism in Alexandria and the Egyptian deserts. The time span they cover ranges from the early centuries of Christianity to the present time.

Fifteen chapters are related to Alexandria and its environs. Samuel Moawad analyzes Greek, Coptic, and Arabic texts that refer to St. Mark as apostle, evangelist, and founder of the Church of Alexandria—its first saint, patriarch, and martyr. A number of these texts represent St. Mark as a key figure who guarantees the legitimacy of every Coptic patriarch. The visit of Coptic patriarchs to the relics of St. Mark after their ordination continues to be a part of the consecration rite. The commemoration of St. Mark is one of the great occasions in the Coptic Church. Nader Alfy Zekry

introduces the representations of St. Mark in ivory, icons, wall paintings, and manuscripts before the Mamluk and Ottoman periods. He explores the iconography of St. Mark, which is limited to manuscripts and icons during these two periods, and classifies them into three categories: patriarch and founder of the Coptic Church, one of the four evangelists, and martyr. Fr. Bigoul al-Suriany examines the *History of the Patriarchs of Alexandria* attributed to Yusab, bishop of Fuwwa, *Tarikh al-aba' al-batarika*, and discusses the sources and methodology of its compilers. The late Bishop Epiphanius provided an overview of the relationship of the patriarchs of Alexandria and the Monastery of St. Macarius. He focused on the relationship between the See of Alexandria and the desert elders, the selection of the patriarchs from among the monks, especially from the Monastery of St. Macarius, the visits paid by the patriarchs to St. Macarius Monastery as part of their ordination, the consecration of the church and sanctuaries of St. Macarius Monastery, and the preparation of the Holy Chrism at that monastery.

David Brakke explores Athanasius's impact on the Alexandrian church and the community of Alexandria and its environs in worship, pedagogy, spiritual practice, theology, and asceticism and monasticism. Lois Farag proposes three distinctive phases of the gradual development of methods of Alexandrian biblical interpretation. She introduces briefly the methods of Clement of Alexandria and Origen in the practice of exegesis, and discusses in detail the great efforts of Athanasius and Cyril of Alexandria in the continuity of the Alexandrian legacy of literal exegesis as well as in its development of theological principles. Mark Sheridan deals with the Scriptures in the works of great figures of the Theological School of Alexandria: Origen as a most important commentator of the Scriptures; Eusebius of Caesarea, who wrote commentaries on the Psalms and other biblical books; Didymus of Alexandria, who was one of the most knowledgeable teachers of the Church; and others. Sheridan deals also with Rufus, bishop of Shotep in Upper Egypt at the end of the sixth century, who showed great knowledge of the rules of interpretation that had been developed over many centuries. Ibrahim Saweros surveys the available catalogues and lists of the collections of manuscripts that contain Arabic texts attributed to St. Athanasius the Apostolic. He discusses the contents of a few selected examples of this corpus as a preliminary step in editing it: *The Testament of Abraham*, *The Letter Fallen from Heaven*, and two Arabic homilies on Pentecost. Saweros concludes his chapter with a valuable table showing the works attributed to Athanasius and the scholars who dealt with

them. Youhanna Nessim Youssef briefly introduces the literary structure of a martyrdom and discusses Alexandria as birthplace of the martyr, a transit place before the final execution, a final destination for the execution, and a place of veneration for the martyr. Ewa Zakrzewska analyzes selected aspects of polyphony in the Bohairic *Acts of the Martyrs*, edited by Henri Hyvernat (1977 [1886]), whose text corpus was produced under the auspices of the Patriarchate of Alexandria about the tenth–eleventh century. She concentrates on forms and functions of the direct reported speech that is typically introduced by dedicated expressions called quotative indexes.

Grzegorz Majcherek describes the architecture of a complex of auditoria dated to the fifth through seventh centuries that has been discovered by the University of Warsaw's expedition at the Kom al-Dikka site in Alexandria. He discusses this unique complex in late antiquity in the light of the literary sources and shows that this “university” complex is material proof of the continuation and vitality of the intellectual and academic traditions of Alexandria. Cäcilia Fluck focuses on the rediscovery of the Carl Maria Kaufmann collection of objects from Abu Mina in the Museum of Byzantine Art, Berlin. She reviews the published research on that collection and points out that a contextualizing study of that collection is still lacking. Fluck concludes her chapter with a valuable table of the main publications of objects from Kaufmann's excavations in Abu Mina in the Early Christian and Byzantine Collection, Berlin. Gertrud van Loon explores the sophisticated and almost complete iconographic program of wall paintings of the small church at Karm al-Ahbariya in the area of Mareotis. She discusses in more detail the scenes from the life of Emperor Constantine the Great. Van Loon emphasizes the importance of a comprehensive study to put the remaining wall paintings and architectural decoration from Mareotis into context.

Mary Ghattas explores the Christian history of Alexandria from the time of Muhammad Ali (1805–48) to the present. She analyzes the situation of Christianity and the attitudes of several groups of Christians when Alexandria was a cosmopolitan city (1805–1952). Then she focuses on the developments that led to Alexandria's changing landscape as it became a center of Islamist movements (1952–present). She attempts to locate Copts within that period. Mary Kupelian introduces the Armenians of Alexandria from the early nineteenth century to present. She deals with their religious and cultural legacy as well as their contributions to that city as a vibrant community. She touches on their churches, schools, clubs, publishing and printing establishments, and the important personalities of the Armenian community there.

As we venture away from Alexandria to the west and south, we see the evidence of Christianity and its monastic tradition in both Libya and the Western Desert of Egypt. This volume includes seven chapters dealing with these regions. Frank Feder explores one of the main literary Coptic dialects that was recently discovered in archaeological excavations in the Kellis area, the Lycopolitan dialect. These texts were found in the Dakhla Oasis area, produced by a Manichaean community there. This is the same dialect, with its associated subdialects, that dominated both the Gnostic texts of Nag Hammadi to the south and the Manichaean texts of Madinat Madi to the north. The archaeology of the Kellis site is further investigated by Jean-Daniel Dubois. In this chapter he deals more extensively with the subject matter of the manuscripts discovered in that region, both Greek and Coptic. Such manuscripts with their archaeological context give a better understanding of how this rather short-lived community lived and functioned in the fourth century.

There are three chapters dealing with subjects related to the Kharga Oasis to the east. The first is by Jacques van der Vliet, who explores the history of the region through the inscriptions left by the various groups that inhabited the area over time. Although the area is presumed to be nomadic in nature, with groups that tended to be relocating all the time, there were places that left permanent archeological remains, in particular the Bagawat necropolis and its Christian pilgrimage or monastic sites. The next two chapters deal specifically with Bagawat. The first of these is by Gisèle Hadji-Minaglou, in which she investigates the archaeology of the cemetery found there. The second, by Karel Innemée, deals with monastic features found in the architecture of the site. More specifically, he deals with the types of meals and food storage that can be interpreted from the archeological remains excavated there. He further draws contrasts and comparisons with practices found in the monasteries of Wadi al-Natrun to the north.

The remaining two chapters dealing with this region deal with both the ancient and modern history of the area. In the first, Intisar Hazawi surveys the relationship between the Cyrenaican monks of the Pentapolis region of eastern Libya and the Egyptian monks of the fourth and fifth centuries. She explores the monastic life there primarily through the letters of Synesius, the bishop of Ptolemais from this period. In the absence of archaeological evidence, the literary evidences allude to monastic settlements being established in places that once served a different function in the mountains or pagan establishments. Also, on the basis of the literary evidence she shows that both the monks of the Wadi al-Natrun and those of Cyrene may have

encountered each other in the common desert between them. On the basis of the same literary sources, the Berber nomadic tribes were a constant and grave threat to the Cyrenaican area, much like what happened in Wadi al-Natrun and with similar devastating outcomes. The other chapter, by Adel F. Sadek, deals primarily with the modern state of Christianity in the Western Desert in general and the pastoral care provided by the Coptic Church to its inhabitants. He begins with a historical survey of Christianity there as found in Church sources. He then explores the Christian churches and monasteries that were recently established there and the type of pastoral care that the Coptic Church is providing in the region.

Turning our attention to the Eastern Desert, this volume contains four chapters dealing with the region. We begin with the chapter by Elizabeth Agaiby about her work on the Pseudo-Serapionic *Life of St. Antony*, which dominated the monastic and literary conversation about St. Antony from the thirteenth to the early twentieth centuries. This previously unpublished Arabic work deals in detail with his struggles with demons in the desert. The author surveyed all the manuscripts of that vita found in the libraries of both of the Red Sea monasteries, St. Antony and St. Paul. She summarizes her exhaustive research on the codicological feature of the manuscripts, the contents, and the possible dating of this vita. The next chapter in this category, by Bishop Martyros, explores the relationship between the Red Sea monasteries and those of Wadi al-Natrun. He begins with the relationship between St. Macarius and St. Antony and the movement of monks between the two regions in the fourth and fifth centuries. He further investigates this relationship in the fourteenth–fifteenth centuries and later. He concludes with the efforts of Pope Shenouda III in the modern era in revitalizing the monastic life in St. Paul Monastery. The chapter by Hany N. Takla deals with a preliminary survey of the manuscripts that were once the property of the Red Sea monasteries but are now found in libraries and monasteries outside of Egypt. Thirty-two manuscripts were investigated to discover how they ended up where they are now. The final chapter in this group, by Jan Ciglenc̆ki, deals with the ancient monastic *laura* Wadi Naqqat. This site was excavated as early as 1823 by John Gardner Wilkinson. The author explores the archaeology, the architecture, and the literary sources of both the church and the monastic *laura* there. He also contrasts this site to another monastic site in the mountains there, the *laura* of Wadi Abu Darag. In conclusion he draws attention to the constant threat to the safety of the monuments in Egypt following the 2011 Revolution.

The last category of chapters includes three dealing with differing topics related to important aspects of Christianity and monasticism in Coptic Egypt as a whole. Ashraf Alexander Sadek reviews the textual evidence of the Coptic tradition regarding the Holy Family's journey from Palestine to Egypt. In particular, he explores the lasting influence of their presence on the great Christian spiritual tradition that grew strong in the Egyptian deserts centuries later and continues to the present day. Fr. Antony St. Shenouda explores the ancient Christian practice of the Arrow Prayer and its use in monastic circles. He emphasizes its use as a weapon in spiritual warfare among the monks of the desert, especially as found in our sources about St. Antony of Egypt. The last of these chapters is by Ashraf Nageh, who discusses the new trends in preservation of Coptic monuments over the past three decades. These trends emphasize the materials used in the building of these monuments and restoring their integrity without trying to artificially cover the building material in accordance with what restorers of the past thought they should look like. Thus, the imperfections become a history to be preserved and documented, rather than to arbitrarily cover up.

As this volume represents the last of the series of the systematic regional treatment of Christianity and monasticism in Egypt, we are looking forward to a final volume that will provide a general index to all of the eight volumes. This volume will further enhance the value of this already essential and unique scholarly resource for the study of the Coptic heritage.

Our heartfelt thanks are due to all the contributors for their valuable contributions to this volume. Our thanks go first to H.H. Pope Tawadros II for hosting the Symposium at the distinguished Logos Center at the papal residence in Wadi al-Natrun. His physical presence and hospitable nature made the symposium an unforgettable event. Our thanks go also to Dr. Fawzy Estafanous, president of the St. Mark Foundation, for supporting the symposium and its proceedings. We would like to express our thanks to the staff of the American University in Cairo Press for their interest and professionalism in publishing the proceedings of the symposia on Christianity and Monasticism in Egypt, and especially to Nigel Fletcher-Jones, Neil Hewison, Nadia Naqib, and Johanna Baboukis.

Finally, it is our pleasure and honor to dedicate this volume to Dr. Fawzy Estafanous in acknowledgment of his great devotion and tireless work in promoting the Coptic heritage through the many activities he has directed within the work of the St. Mark Foundation for the past nearly quarter century.